

RECOLLECTIONS OF A MUTE.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF Events and Incidents

WHICH HAVE
TRANSPIRED WITHIN MY KNOWLEDGE.

BY MISS A. R. KNIGHT.

PLEASE READ THIS!

My health having failed, and having no other means of obtaining a livelihood, I have written a Brief Sketch of such events as have transpired within my recollection. If any Gentleman, or Lady, shall please to purchase my little History, they will confer on me a favor which will be thankfully received at their hands.

ALMENA R. KNIGHT.

Deaf and Dumb,

Jackson, Michigan.

STEAM PRESS PRINT OF THE REVIEW AND HERALD OFFICE,
BATTLE CREEK, MICH.

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DEAF AND DUMB ALPHABET.

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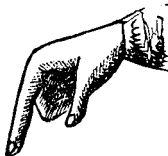
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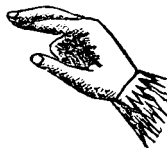
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THE DEAF AND DUMB.

A FEW words to the readers of this little history on the subject of the Deaf and Dumb. Many may never have had opportunity of observing this afflicted portion of our fellow-creatures, and those who have, may not have considered fully the particulars of their situation. All know that language is learned by imitating sounds uttered by others. Some sounds, such as crying, laughing, screaming, are natural expressions of strong feeling, common to all rational beings. But speech must be learned by hearing others speak, or it will never be learned at all. People often remark that such a person was born deaf and dumb; whereas, in truth, every one is born dumb, and must remain so until reason dawns, and they begin to imitate the words used by others. But when a person is born deaf, he continues dumb, because he hears no language spoken; or, at best, he will only make strange noises, in attempting to imitate the movements he observes in the lips of others, who can use their organs of speech.

Thus the poor mutes are shut out from communicating their ideas, except by such signs as they can desire to express themselves by; and they are seldom understood or regarded, unless by those very nearly and tenderly interested in the welfare of the afflicted creatures who use them.

A child who is born deaf may be taught to kneel, to hold up its hands, and often will do so—the most affecting aspect of devotion. But they can know but little of God, the Creator and Preserver, the Redeemer and Sanctifier of our fallen race. Interest, curiosity and awe are often excited to a painful degree, in the minds of the deaf and dumb, by the outward solemnity of worship; but it is an unfathomable mystery to their understandings, and they pine in secret to unravel it. The deaf mute plainly sees that others understand what is to him so strange, and that they have a mode

of communicating to all but himself; that motion of the lips to which he can attach no meaning, he sees to be quite intelligible to others. They feel the difference there is between themselves and others. They are conscious of being under some peculiar disadvantage.

Perhaps nothing appears to occasion such distressing perplexity to an uneducated mute, as the death and burial of his fellow creatures. The change produced upon the countenance which used to smile on them, the icy coldness and total insensibility of the frame and depositing it deep beneath the earth's surface, with the solemn act of worship accompanying it—all are terribly exciting to him, until he gains instruction so that he can read his Bible, and there finds contained the future resurrection of the dead. 1 Cor. xv, 52, 53.—“And the dead shall be raised incorruptible; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality; then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

This most evidently removes from the mind a most oppressive weight of anxious doubt, illuminates the soul, and creates within an anxious desire for salvation through Jesus Christ, that they may obtain eternal life at the resurrection.

“Faith lifts the veil before our eyes,
And bids us view a happier clime,
Where verdant fields in beauty rise,
Beyond the withering blight of time,
And brings the blissful moment near,
When we in glory shall appear.

“What transport then shall fill the soul,
When parted friends again shall meet,
Beyond the reach of death's control,
And cast their crowns at Jesus' feet,
His matchless love and grace adore,
And never taste of sorrow more.”

Recollections of a Mute.

I WAS born in Hanover, Jackson county, State of Michigan, in the year 1836. My father's name was James Knight. He was at that time a preacher of the Christian connection. My mother had many fears, at times, that I was deaf. It was not decided, however, until I was near a year old, and then by shaking a heavy bell over my head as soon as I fell asleep, which did not awake me. My parents then wept over their unfortunate child.

I think, as near as I can recollect, that I was not far from four years old when I first discovered that I was not like the rest of my brothers and sisters older than myself. Notwithstanding this, I enjoyed life very well; though it seemed hard sometimes that I could not make my playmates understand me as well as they could each other. This was a grief to me, and would often make me weep bitterly.

I do not recollect many things that would be interesting until seven years of age, when my parents moved to the city of Detroit. Then I was very much amused, for there I found one like myself, and was no longer one alone in the world. She is a daughter of Mr. Fairbairn. I would often steal away from home to make her a visit. We could understand each other better than we could those that could hear and talk; and, though I was young, yet I had much sympathy for her. Another circumstance I would name: There I first went to school and learned the alphabet, though it was a common select school. But the teacher seemed to take a deep interest in my welfare, and therefore he cut twenty-four small blocks with the alphabet on them. He would place the object before me, then commence to spell the thing by placing the blocks in

rotation with letters to spell the word. In this way I learned to spell many words, which interested me very much.

My parents often tried to make me understand that there were schools where they educated those like me ; and that there were many taught to read and write, at those schools, as well as children that could hear and talk, and they intended to take me to one of those schools.

When I was ten years of age, they moved to the State of Ohio, that I might become a State pupil in the Deaf and Dumb Asylum at Columbus. They accordingly took me there in January, 1846. On entering the Asylum, I could not bear the thought of being left among strangers, and was unwilling to go into the school-rooms where the pupils were ; but I was soon persuaded to venture. Oh, how wonderful it seemed to me, that there were one hundred and forty-six, in that great building, of those unfortunate beings like myself, and yet fortunate that they could be taught the English language by signs, and not only have a knowledge of the present, but of the past, and likewise of the future. It was there I first learned to read my Bible in which I found salvation through Christ.

My parents taught me to kneel with the family in worship, but I had no knowledge of what they worshiped until I received my education. At first it seemed like a new world to me, and more so as I was taught to read and understand what I read.

It seemed to me very wonderful that God was so good, to take care of all the world and give them food and clothing, and make the grass grow to feed all the beasts of the field ; and that he was mindful of the fowls that fly in the air, the fish that swim in the sea, and everything that creeps upon the ground. Our great Creator had been so good as to bless the people of the State of Ohio with the means to make all the Deaf and Dumb, Blind and Insane, as com-

fortable and as happy as they could be in their sphere, and elevate their minds to higher and holier objects than earth can yield. Yes, the beloved Son of God condescended to come down here, suffer and die upon the cross for us poor mortal worms. He was laid in the grave, but rose again the third day, and ascended up on high, led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. Oh, what gifts are bestowed upon us! Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. From him emanates every blessing. To him we owe the deepest gratitude of our hearts. In and through Him we have glory, immortality and eternal life, if we by patient continuing in well-doing seek for it.

When I went to the asylum, I had two brothers and one sister, older than myself. In about two years from that time, my brother, James M. Knight, next older than I, died in Detroit, after ten weeks' severe sickness—first brain, then typhus fever—aged fourteen years.

About two years from that time, my father, on his way to California, died of cholera, at Council Bluffs. My mother, three youngest brothers, and sister were then living in Oberlin. My sister had been in school at the Institute for two years, intending to take a college course if her father had lived. But after his death my mother did not think she could stay there any longer, and moved back to Michigan, in the village of Jackson. She sent for me to come to Oberlin and go with her. But oh, how grieved I was to leave all the pupils with whom I had associated for something over four years—likewise my teachers and my beloved matron—from whom I had gained so much light and knowledge. They had taught me to read and write, and pray to God, the Giver of all these blessings bestowed upon us poor unworthy creatures of his kind

care. My mother and sister tried to comfort me, but they could not make up the loss, for it was but little they could understand me, or I them; for they did not understand the signs taught in our schools. But I knew I must be resigned, and try to help my mother all I could. Through the mercy and goodness of God, we found many kind friends in and about Jackson that remembered the widow and the fatherless. My eldest brother, Charles Knight, then lived in Detroit. He helped us what he could. I loved my brother Charles very much. He was very kind to me, and would always bring some presents to me when he came home. But sad to relate, a little more than two years after his father died, he came home and made his last visit. He then returned to Detroit, stayed till next week, then went to Chicago with some other young men, and hired out for fifty days; worked ten days, then was taken with inflammation or bilious colic. He sent for his mother. She started, got as far as Niles, and met a train of cars bringing home his corpse to us at Jackson, where he was interred the same day. He was cut down in the bloom of life, sick only two days—aged twenty-two. He was very much beloved by all who knew him, and was very kindly attended to with all hospitality through his sickness and burial, and kind friends soon after assisted in raising a handsome donation to relieve the wants of the bereaved family, which was very thankfully received. My only sister, Mary Ann, taught school for a living after her father's death, most of the time. Up to her last sickness she was teaching about three miles from Jackson. Her health became so poor she was obliged to leave her school and come home, where she was confined most of the time for eight months. She suffered much with pain in her limbs, and an abscess in her side and back. Before she died, while sick, she professed faith in Jesus, and keeping all the commandments.

of God. She would say she did not want to live, unless it could be for the glory of God. She was once asked if "it was not hard to be confined so long upon a bed of sickness?" She replied, "Oh, no, this is the happiest part of my life." She said, while dying she was ready and willing to go," and told who she wanted to preach her funeral sermon. She fell asleep in Jesus on the 26th of August, 1854, almost two years from the time her brother Charles died. She rests by his side in the Cemetery at Jackson, till the resurrection morn. Her age was twenty-two years. Four of the eldest taken out of the family in six years! What a vacancy!

I am now the oldest child left—three brothers younger—now my only sister is gone. She had learned to talk with me by signs better than any other one, and I missed her very much. But why should I mourn?

"She sleeps in Jesus—peaceful rest—
No mortal strife invades her breast;
No pain, or sin, or woe, or care,
Can reach the silent slumberer there.

"She sleeps in Jesus—soon to rise,
When the last trump shall rend the skies!
Then burst the fetters of the tomb,
To wake in full immortal bloom.

"She sleeps in Jesus—cease thy grief;
Let this afford thee sweet relief,
That freed from death's triumphant reign,
In Heaven she will live again."

During my sister's illness I had overdone, and was troubled very much with a pain in my side and shoulder. My health was poor, I was very much depressed in both body and mind. My mother and friends thought best for me to go to Flint to school, if my health would admit. I felt very much grieved to leave my poor brother and sister lying there. But my mother took me to Flint, the first of No-

vember, where I stayed till the term closed, the last of July. There I formed an acquaintance with quite a number of mutes in this State. I enjoyed their society very much while I was there, and my health improved very fast. Next May I went again at the commencement of the term, in the new Asylum, where I stayed until the term closed, the last of July. Two weeks I was sick before the term closed, unable to attend school, and was not well when I came home. My mother had moved to Augusta, where I went and stayed with her. I was not able to return next commencement, first of October, so my mother took me a journey, and traveled and visited with me for my health. While we were absent from home, I had a very bad cough, and was taken with one of the glands swelling in my throat. It became very much inflamed all over my face, and was exceedingly painful till I had it lanced, which was about three weeks after it commenced swelling. This was in October, two months since. It continues to discharge yet, and the doctor thinks it scrofula. I have not been able to labor much, and, therefore, have spent a few days in writing a short history of events that I can recollect, and of which my friends have informed me, as they have transpired.

I sent the manuscript to a lady in Jackson, who felt a special interest in my welfare. She being well acquainted with my ill health and circumstances in life, took upon her to raise a donation and get one thousand copies printed unbeknown to me. She sent for me to come and visit her on the first of January, when I received them as a New Year's present, which was a happy circumstance for me.

Had it not been for the aid of kind friends at that time, I might have been in the grave. My cough had nearly prostrated me; and my mother, by being constantly broken of her rest in attending upon me every night, was in nearly as bad a condi-

tion. My physician said that he did not think I could live over two months, unless I got immediate relief. He said traveling would be good for me when it was pleasant and I was able to go out. I shall ever remember with the deepest gratitude Mr. R. N. Rice, Superintendent of the M. C. R. R., who favored me with a free pass, so that I could travel for my health and sell my little books, and obtain means to buy medicine and other necessities for my comfort. I deprived myself of many things which others would have had, to save, if it were possible, enough to obtain a home for myself, my mother, and little brothers. There was nothing on earth that I desired more than a home of my own, in my feeble state of health. I hope and pray that I may ever be thankful to my kind Father in heaven for my home. Sweet home! Oh, how I have longed for a home, which I now realize, and thank kind friends for the assistance they have rendered me.

June 27th, 1860, I had the happiness of attending the examination of all the classes of the Indianapolis Institution, which extended through two days. It was held in the chapel. The occasion was made one of more than usual interest by the presence of between sixty and seventy of the former graduates, who, by invitation, were in attendance to witness the exercises, and to renew old acquaintances and form new ones. The meeting of teachers, pupils, and classmates, after being separated so long, was one of unalloyed happiness to all. It was pleasing to see the evidences of prosperity and thrift which they exhibited. Many of them had married, and some of them brought their wives and children with them. The time they spent there was divided in-attendance upon the examination, and in pleasant social intercourse among themselves and the teachers, and in relating to each other their experiences of joy and sorrow, since they had left the Institution to make their way in the world.

No one could witness their intelligence, their excellent deportment, their pleasant cheerful happiness, and see what education had done for them, and reflect what they would have been without it, but would feel thankful to those who had provided the means of raising such persons from ignorance, and for rendering them useful and happy members of society.

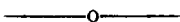
On the morning after the examination most of the company who were not in the secret were very much surprised by the announcement of the intended marriage of two of their numbers, both former graduates of the Institute. The ceremony was performed in the language of signs, at the conclusion of which the happy bride and groom, and the other guests took their departure for their several homes.

I went soon after on an eastern tour with my mother, to visit our friends in New Hampshire and Connecticut, where I had the privilege of attending the convention of the Deaf and Dumb, at Hartford, which was more interesting than anything I had ever before witnessed. It was composed of the aged, middle-aged, and the young, from all parts of the New England States, and most if not all, that were educated there, were in attendance. It was there where the English language was first taught by signs in America.

At the close of the exercises, we all marched from the chapel down to the spot where the first little school of seven pupils was opened, in a hired room, in the year 1817. We were there reminded of the kind hand of a beneficent Providence, of the common Father of the poor and the unfortunate, as well as the most highly favored. Here were some who but a few years since were shut up in almost total darkness, entirely ignorant of God, of the soul, and of a future state. Their minds were utter blanks in the world of truth and thought. But now the dark

cell has been unlocked by the hand of Christian benevolence, and they are brought forth. Well might the grateful language of our heart be, What hath God wrought in our behalf!

After returning, we visited the monument of the memorable Rev. Thos. H. Gallaudet, the founder of the Institution, who first taught the language by signs in our country, which has continued to spread throughout almost every State. He is dead; but he yet speaketh in language unutterable which can penetrate the heart if not the ear. Thanks be to Providence, which has raised up others to take his place and carry forward this great work.



REFLECTIONS

I CONSIDER it a great blessing that God has given us a knowledge of language by signs. Though I never heard a syllable in my life, yet I can converse with any of my friends by writing, which I esteem a great privilege. It often occurs to my mind whether the young, the gay youth, and the aged, who can hear and talk, feel thankful for this gift, or do they consider it a blessing bestowed on them for which they are accountable? Do they realize that they have got to give an account for every idle word they speak? The third commandment says: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Are they so thoughtless as to take His name in vain, who has bestowed on them such an inestimable blessing as the gift of hearing and the gift of speech? If any are, oh, pause for a moment and consider—what if you were to be deprived of that gift! Be entreated by the

pen of one whose tongue is as silent as the grave, to go no further in the broad road that leads to death, but turn to Him who has bestowed on you innumerable blessings, and offered you eternal life if you will keep His commandments. Jesus said, "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city."—Rev. xxii, 12, 14. I want to be there. There will the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing for joy.

"When that new sense is given,
What rapture will its first experience be,
That never woke to meaner melody
Than the rich songs of Heaven;
To hear the full-toned anthems swelling round,
And join the choir of angels united in one sound."

.. Though clouds may arise and tempests assail,
And loud sound the wild, tempestuous gale,
And fortune may frown—whatever betide,
Never, no, never, look on the dark side.

When the high and the proud seem to treat thee with scorn,
And thy bosom with anguish is torn and forlorn,
When friends e'en forsake and coldly deride—
Never, no, never, look on the dark side.

Though no light gleams o'er thy desolate way,
To cheer the lonely, wearisome day,
Remember, lone one, whatever betide.
Beyond the dark cloud there is a bright side.

If the pain of affliction thou would'st allay,
And make troubles and trials vanish away,
And down life's dark stream in peace thou wouldst glide,
Ever, yes, ever, look on the bright side.

